## CHURCH



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"It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change."

Charles Darwin
Born: February 12, 1809
Died: April 19, 1882

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2020 October

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The greatest happiness of the thinking man is to have fathomed what can be fathomed, and quietly to reverence what is unfathomable. (Goethe)








































































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 د(m) 15:5).



























































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"Naked, come to Thee for dress;
Helpless, look to Thee for grace:
Foul, I to the fountain fly,
Wash me, Saviour, or I die."






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> The author is a Senior Sales Executive, S.B.I. Life, Aluva.

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With the generous rainfall this summer my very young ambazham (Indian Hog Plum) is breaking forth into hilarious blossoms.The savoury ambazhanga pickle already whets my appetite by anticipation! While greeting the plant early, on the clear morning after nightlong showers, I noticed a droplet of water suspended in plain air between two bunches of buds.. On close scrutiny it became clear that the droplet was attached to a very fine, almost imperceptible thread of a cobweb. Soon the webmaster appeared from behind the bouquets. Obviously he hadn't caught any
insect due to rain. His net got twisted and spoiled. He looked hungry. The only thing trapped on the net was a beautiful droplet of rainwater. Did I say beautiful? He may not agree with my sense of beauty. When I am terribly hungry and craving for food you offer me a rose flower and want me to say it's beautiful?...

Despite all, he posed for my picture with equanimity. He seemed to have the detached air of an ancient wise man who had learned to survive many a disaster. The rain will go away. The net will be reconstructed. The food will come by...

## ? * ? [ —

The dew drop on the green grass fringe
Reflects the sun, the sky, the universe and my peeping eye.
You smile... sparkle... I envy you, transient beauty
A small jerk you are gone....
Still you keep on smiling... sparkling...
Dr. Molly Joseph in 'Myna's Musings'

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## KITCHEN ${ }^{\prime \prime}$ TREASURES

## WAYS OF THE UNDERDOG-

## Stories from the Old Testament and elsewhere

(Continued)

## 6. Martin Luther King Jr. and the American Civil Rights Movement

The American Civil Rights Movement against racial segregation and discrimination in the U.S. was led by Martin Luther King Jr. The movement had its origin in 1955 in Montgomery, Alabama. The most important and successful part of his campaign took place in Birmingham in 1963. His campaign manager there was Wyatt Walker, the executive director of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the organisation spearheading the civil rights movement. While King was a moral absolutist who did not stray from his principles even when under attack, Walker was a pragmatist who would accommodate or alter his morality for the sake of getting a job done.

When Martin Luther King came to Birmingham, his movement was in a crisis. He had just spent nine months directing protests against segregation in Albany, Georgia, two hundred miles to the south, without winning any significant concessions. King and Walker failed there because the Albany police chief, Laurie Pritchett, tried his best to avoid a confrontation. The national press, which came to Albany to
cover the confrontation between the whites and the blacks could not find anything that would evoke people's interest. Lacking media attention, the campaign just withered away.

The ground realities in Birmingham were quite different. In 1963, it was the most racially divided city in America. In Birmingham, King was outgunned and overmatched. He was the overwhelming underdog. The city's public safety commissioner Eugene "Bull" Connor was a racist and was arrogance personified. King and Walker could not match him strength for strength. " Wyatt," King said, "you have got to find the means to create a crisis, to make Bull Connor tip his hand."

The plan Walker devised for Birmingham was called Project C - for confrontation. Project C had three acts, each designed to be bigger and more provocative than the last. It began with a series of sit-ins at local businesses. That was to draw media attention to the problem of segregation. The second was a boycott of downtown businesses, to put financial pressure on the white business community to reconsider their practices
toward their black customers. Act three was a series of marches to back up the boycott and fill up the jails - because once Connor ran out of cells he would have to deal with the protesters directly. Project C failed to create the crisis Walker hoped for and it started losing precious momentum.

Then Walker decided to bring children from local black high schools into the movement. Hundreds of children were arrested and put in jail. Connor used water cannons against the marchers. Then he unleashed German Shepherd police dogs on the children. A German Shepherd lunged at a boy. He leaned in, arms limp, as if to say, " Take me, here I am." On the next day, the picture ran on the front page of every newspaper around the country.

Wyatt Walker created the crisis that King wanted and that crisis was the photograph of the teenage boy being attacked by a police dog. The photo was discussed on the floor of the American Congress and in countless living rooms and classrooms. The movement was suddenly on course to success. A year later, the US Congress passed the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964, one of the most important pieces of legislation in the history of the United States.

However, there were widespread protests against using children as marchers. In public, the leaders of the movement pretended that they were shocked at the way Connor let the dogs loose on the protesters - while at the
same time, they were jumping for joy behind closed doors. It was reported that when the dogs lunged at the children, Walker started jumping with joy, crying "We've got a movement. We've got a movement. We had some police brutality."

Thus, Walker and King played a complex and duplicitous game, like many underdogs in fables and in real life, to create the crisis in Birmingham that turned out to be the most important milestone in the history of the American Civil Rights Movement and its eventual success.

When we examine these underdog success stories, one thing becomes clear - success does not come to the underdog by chance, but through hard work and perseverance. They employ varied strategies to achieve their ends. Some of these methods, many people criticise, are nothing but trickery and deception, and some others are unethical because of the refusal to play by the book. Before passing judgments, we need to ask ourselves some questions.

What are the options available to ordinary people when they confront powerful opponents? Should they play by the rules even when the rules are lopsided, or should they follow their instincts? Should they persevere or give up? Should they fight back or forgive?

The answers are not easy.
(concluded)

## "Go not to the Temple"



One of the aftermaths of Covid - 19, the fast spreading pandemic of the present times, is the closure of the places of worship for preventing the massive spread of the Corona Virus. People all over the world have now learned to worship God without going to the temples, churches, mosques and gurudwaras. To many, their houses have become their places of worship. The church authorities who have been quarrelling among themselves over the right of possession of churches for decades, and the faithful who crowd the distant pilgrim centres seeking God, should realize that God does not reside within the four walls of those antagonistic churches and in the pilgrim centres, but within themselves. If we cannot see God within ourselves, in our fellow beings, all our search for Him will become a futile exercise. "God", whom we cannot define in words, according to Dr. Radhakrishnan, the former President of India, "is the omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent power found in all men in different forms." Our heart is the temple of God. We should make our hearts holy, if we want God to live in them. I Corinthians 3:16-17 says, "Know you not that you are the temple of God and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple you are."

It is meaningless to make a callous attempt to seek God in a man-made temple. It is better not to go there, unless your heart is free from
vicious thoughts and desires, says Rabindranath Tagore who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913 for his collection of poems titled Gitanjali, which is in the form of a song offering to God. Tagore's 'Go Not to the Temple' reads:

Go not to the temple to put flowers upon the feet of God,
First fill your own house with the Fragrance of love and kindness.
Go not to the temple to light candles
before the altar of God,
First remove the darkness of sin, pride and ego, from your heart...
Go not to the temple to bow down your head in prayer,
First learn to bow in humility before your fellowmen.
Go not to the temple to pray on bended knees,
First bend down to lift someone who is down-trodden.
And strengthen the young ones, Not crush them.
Go not to the temple to askfor forgiveness for your sins, First forgive from your heart those who have hurt you!
How relevant the poem is in the present context in which faithful people are prevented from going to their places of worship. Perhaps, God does not want us to worship Him in congregations without any fellow - feeling in our hearts.


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## Let's Listen <br> Aleyamma Lukose

## AWESOME ENCOUNTERS WITH GOD



The Bible has a number of stories about God's encounters with certain chosen people, which are so fascinating. I have picked up two such encounters - one with St. Paul and the other with Moses - for a deeper analysis.

Paul, like his father, possessed a Roman citizenship, which was a high privilege in those days. He was a Hebrew zealot, a religious leader of Tarsus, a Roman city. This gave him the opportunity to be exposed to the most advanced learning of the day at a University known for its stoic philosophers. He had a great command of Greek. At the age of fourteen, he went to study under Gamaliel, one of the greatest rabbis of the time. He was convinced that following the Jewish law was the only way to salvation. He was extremely zealous of his ancestral traditions. The Christians attributing to Jesus the saving role robbed the Jewish law of its value. So he was violently hostile to the Christian faith which negated the Jewish view. To exterminate this sect became his passion. So he started on his mission of destroying Christian believers.

He went from house to house, dragging people out, both men and women, and throwing them into jails. He watched and approved the stoning of Stephen; he was given the job of guarding the clothes of those who were killing Stephen. (I have a feeling that although he hated the

Christians, Stephen's manner of death, the way he died and the way he prayed for forgiveness for his persecutors, could have touched a chord in Paul's heart).

The conversion of Paul after his encounter with Jesus on his way to Damascus is enough to prove Christianity, though there are people who refer to this incident as the greatest hallucination in history. After this encounter, his character changed drastically. His mission was transformed from that of a gentile hater to a missionary to gentiles. Till then he had looked at them as being inferior to God's chosen people. The change in him was a matter of amazement to everybody who had heard about his earlier exploits. Even the disciples of Jesus must have been doubtful of his sincerity. The Bible records that he went back to Tarsus and stayed there till he was properly equipped to speak about Jesus. During this time Jesus must have revealed to him his role as a missionary.

Paul's character was completely changed. An intolerant, bitter, persecuting religious bigot changed into a patient, kind, enduring, self-sacrificing man. His message was transformed though he was still proud about his Jewish heritage; he had changed from a bitter antagonist to a determined protagonist of the Christian faith. He talked and debated with the Grecian Jews, but they tried to kill him.

He had the gift of healing also. The Bible records his healing of a cripple in Lystra. After being stripped and flogged and thrown into prison, Paul and Silas prayed and sang hymns in the night. In Corinth he was unjustly charged with treason, and was beaten up by the crowd. How was he able to bear all these tribulations, unless he had a strong faith in Jesus, his Saviour?

The conversion of Paul marks not only a turning point in his personal history, but also an important epoch in the history of the apostolic church, and consequently, in the history of mankind. It was the most fruitful event after the miracle of Pentecost. Many have found the radical transformation of the Pharisee of Pharisees the most convincing evidence of the truth and power of the religion to which he was converted and the ultimate worth and place of the person of Christ. "The conversion and apostleship of St. Paul alone, when duly considered, was itself a demonstration sufficient to prove Christianity to be a divine revelation" (Lord Lytton). St. Pauls' twenty five years of suffering and service, and his final martyrdom could not have happened if his encounter with Jesus was a mere hallucination; this can happen only as a result of a profound and revolutionary religious experience.

Where he had denied that a crucified man can be a Messiah, he declared that Jesus indeed was the Messiah. The cross was no longer a stumbling block, but the very essence of God's Messianic redemption. From a Jewish zealot, Paul became an evangelist to the gentiles. He wanted to be known as a servant of Christ.

Now let us turn to Moses. There are people who question the historical existence of Moses, and the reality of the events in which he is stated to have taken part. The plain fact is, at the beginning of the story the Israelites are an enslaved people in Egypt, and at the end of it, they are just about to enter Canaan with a new sense of being God's people under God's guidance. Such things do not just happen; a movement does not come into existence without a leader. If Moses hadn't existed, we would have had to invent him to account for the facts.

In the story, Moses is shown with a threefold inheritance. He is an Israelite, a people now oppressed, but with glorious memories of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Saved from death when he was a baby, during the time of persecution in Egypt, he was brought up as a prince, and had access to all the wisdom of the Egyptians with their wonderful civilisation, and he developed a natural aptitude for command. Once when he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew labourer, one of his own people, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. When he realised that people had come to know about it, in order to escape punishment, he ran away to Midian; the life of an Egyptian prince changed to that of a Midianite shepherd boy. During the many years of exile, he lived a free desert life and learnt all the wilderness craft.

But all this did not make him a leader until he met God at the burning bush. What follows is a classical example of a divine call. First, the overwhelming sense of God's presence, and then a clear vision of a great task to be accomplished, and thirdly we see the natural shrinking of a
(Contd. on page 34)


The alarm is my sign that
I'm granted a new day.
As I rise from my bed
I know my feet still work.
It's another day granted to my lifetime.
As I open each door in the morning, I know My household and its occupants are safe.
When I open the front door, mist And sunlight give the promise of something fresh.
A new day for this world- the birds,
Trees, butterflies and flowers know it.
How much do we take for granted?
We sleep so deep, we sleep so lifeless each night
The fact that we wake up,
The fact that the sun still rises-
Yet somewhere in the world, there are
People whose eyes close forever,
People who long for fresh air,
People who pray for freedom and peace.
Why can't this world be better?
Why can't all people love more?
Why do our newspapers carry more bad news than good?
Why do we have to compete for and prove everything?
Why can't we be carefree and faithful?

Every morning, the sun tells us a lessonThat today is not the end of the world. Every morning, as our limbs stretch out We should be grateful for a new dayAnd be the change the world needsBe the delight this world needs.
Dusk will follow soon after the new dawn. Travel your miles before you sleep. Enjoy the beauty and charm of this world Show that you care, show that you love Pray for your near and dear, Pray for those who suffer, those who are in pain, Pray for tomorrow's break of day.
Those who sleep well are blessed Those who sleep enough are fortunate. If you wake up from your sleep, keep going If you see the sun in the morning, keep living.
Don't be a jinx, don't be a bother
Be kind to all and book your eternal balcony seat.

Dedicated to the victims of the Nepal tragedyto the two families who slept peacefully, not knowing their time had come - and to Madhav, who still believes his parents and brother will come by another flight tomorrow$23^{\text {rd }}$ January, 2020.

Mrs. Remya Rachel Thomas is the Vice Principal, Christukula Mission H.S. School, Satna, M.P.

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## DO NOT FRET



We are living in a world which, during the course of the past few months, has been subjected to such devastation, that its present environment is unfamiliar to us. We are trying to live with the new circumstances.

Sometimes we feel frustrated, sometimes disappointed. We feel insecure and hopeless, not knowing where the new ways of living are leading us and how it will end. God allows these things to happen, with a purpose which we long to know, so that we could co-operate with His intentions.

Has this disaster changed people to do good, or do we still pursue our wicked ways? Have the proud become humble, have the cheating, tricking people repented to do what is right in the sight of God? When we continue to do evil and suffer, God patiently waits for us to repent and return to him. God allows these sufferings even to the righteous, but they are not aware of the blessings he has in store for them.

The Bible teaches us through the lives of men that suffering leads to blessing.

Moses, brought up in the luxury of the palace of Pharaoh had to be a shepherd of Jethro for forty years, tending his flock in the desert of Midian. God called him and appointed him as the leader of the Israelites to bring them from slavery to freedom, from Egypt to the Promised Land. For another forty years Moses travelled through the desert. His strength was that the presence of God was with him. He talked to God face to face like a friend (Exodus 33:11).

Oh! What ablessing!! Moses was humble - "more humble than anyone else on earth" (Num. 12:3). Before he died and was buried in Moab, the Lord Himself showed him from the top of Pisgah on Mount Nebo, the whole land - the land He promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Deut. 34:6).

Job was another person who suffered but "did not sin in all he said" (Job 2:10). Job lost his servants, donkeys, camels, sheep and even his 10 children in one single day. Moreover he had painful sores from the soles of his feet to the top of his head (Job 1:13-19, 2:7). Still he clung to God and remained loyal to Him. At the end of his suffering God blessed him with double of all his previous livestock, and also seven sons and three beautiful daughters.

Think of David's life:When he was a teenager he was anointed by Samuel to replace king Saul. But soon King Saul was jealous of David because he was popular and victorious in all he did. King Saul was afraid of him because the Lord was with David. As King Saul tried to kill David, he ran for his life and became the leader of 600 men who were also in Saul's list of bad people. After 10 years of living like a fugitive, David was anointed king by the Judahites. His suffering was over and he led a blessed life.

Our Lord Jesus suffered rejection, accusations, scourging and finally a shameful, cruel death by crucifixion. He suffered it for the salvation of the world. He rose from the dead and entered into glory.

All these are teaching us that we must not feel disappointed by the present situation. Do not fret. Blessings are awaiting us.

Chronicles 7:14 says, "If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land."

Our God is in heaven. He is listening to our prayers. If He wants to answer our prayers we are expected to do 3 things:

1. We are His people. We are called Christians because we believe in Christ. We are expected to pray for safety from Covid and for the end of the scourge.
2. We are supposed to seek His face. That is, we have to wait upon Him and listen to Him.
3. We have to turn away from wickedness. Pride, jealousy, corruption, egoism, etc. are manifestations of wickedness. A self searching and cleansing by real repentance are needed.

Then,- God will hear our prayers, God will forgive our sins, God will heal the land from Covid.
Do not fret about the present hardships and inconveniences. Let us obey the divine commandments and abide by what is said, in 2 Chronicles 7:14. We will enjoy the blessings He will bestow upon us.

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## Life Stule

Dr. Annie David

## We are all Idol-Worshippers!



I am sure the title I have given above has shocked quite a few of my readers. I am not surprised; it was meant to be shocking. I am sure also that some of you will immediately raise an objection to it. I should be right In making this guess. We know that people who follow Hinduism, for example, worship idols; we boldly claim that we, Christians, never do it, because our God has strictly commanded us not to worship idols, and we firmly believe that we are totally obedient to Him in this respect.

But let us take up a thorough examination of our minds before we make the above claim. Put this question to yourself: "What is an idol?" It is an object you worship, isn'tit? - something that you cherish in your mind, and pay a lot of attention to. Our God has commanded us to worship only Him. This should mean that He should receive priority over everything else in our minds. Search your mind honestly to see if God has really received the kind of prominence in your mind that He expects from you. If you are really honest with yourself, you will see that there are perhaps several other things which receive priority over God in your life. For some people it could be their money - their riches, their possessions; for some others it could be their physical fitness, their well-being; for yet others it could be their attractive looks or polished behaviour which give them prominence in the society, their acceptance,
their fame, their influence, their power; for yet others it could be their education, knowledge or the jobs they hold. Well, there can be an endless list like this. Just search your mind to see if any of these (or any others) hold the priority of attention in your mind. If you are honest with yourself, you are likely to find that there is something that holds more prominence than God in your mind. You do have an idol that you worship! As long as God fails to get the primary position in your mind, you are not fit to be called a true Christian - you are an idol-worshipper!

Well, you would like to ignore and turn away from this warning, wouldn'tyou? Wouldn't you like to curl up cosily in your chair and turn the other way? Yes, that is what you would like to do. But, no! Wouldn't you like to be a true follower of Christ? Yes, of course, you would! Then, take up arms! Start fighting! You may have to fight several bloody battles before your pet god or gods finally flee from you and leave you in peace. They may leave you exhausted. But look up at the crown of glory waiting for you on the other side of the battle-field. Ah! Isn't it worth all the trouble you went through, and much more? Yes, it is well worth it all! So, take up arms; start fighting; immediately! This is the urgent call that every true Christian has necessarily got to pay heed to, at some point in his life.©
human being before a task too great for human resources. Aware of his limitations and inadequacies, Moses made excuses to avoid taking up the task. God assured him, "I will be with you," and told him how to go about it. Finally we see the yielding of a man before God, before His assurance that he would be enabled to accomplish what was being entrusted to him. Every time the Israelites revolted against him and he faced difficulties, he sought help from God; he obeyed God even when he faced formidable situations.

Moses had a special friendship with God, not because he was perfect, but because God chose him, and he in turn, relied whole-heartedly on God's providence. The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as a man spoke to his friend. When he asked God, "Whom will you send with me", to lead the people, God's reply was: "My presence will go with you." After spending forty days and forty nights with God on Mount Sinai, when he came down with the two tablets of Testimony, his face was radiant because he had spent time with God and spoken to Him. Moses was the only man who ever spoke to God face to face. Even though he was called the Israelites' greatest prophet, he was not allowed to enter the Promised Land, just because of a slight disobedience, when he struck the rock for water, instead of speaking to it as he had been commanded by God. He accepted the punishment without a murmur.

Moses, the man who did not want to be sent back to Egypt, because he was slow of speech, delivered the three addresses to Israel which make up the book of

Deuteronomy in the Old Testament of the Bible. God gave him the power to develop from a stuttering shepherd boy into a great national leader and a powerful orator. His courage, humility and wisdom moulded the Hebrew slaves into a mighty nation. But he did not let success go to his head. He knew it was the power of the Lord in whom he trusted. There were many great prophets in Israel after him, but it would be more than a thousand years before one greater than Moses would appear - Jesus.

The history of the Jews from the beginning was a fascinating story. It is recorded in the Bible so clearly with exact dates and places that one cannot brush it aside as unreal. All along, we read about leaders, their accomplishments and setbacks, and how God finally brought them to the 'Promised Land.'

These two stories are examples of how God chooses people who, in the eyes of the world, are the most unlikely, like Paul, a hard-core Jewish zealot, out to annihilate the followers of Jesus and their faith, and the most unfit, like Moses, a stuttering, diffident shepherd wandering with his flock in the Midian wilderness, equips them and commissions them to undergo gruelling experiences and to overcome seemingly impassable obstacles, in order to accomplish great missions.

God has a divine purpose for the life of each one of us - however unworthy and ill-equipped we are.

The lowly water kept for washing the feet of the guests at the wedding at Cana turned into choice wine when the servants obeyed Jesus. Are we prepared to submit ourselves to His guidance, to be transformed and used by Him, for His glory?


The picture is a carving on the main door of the Vakathanam Valiyapally (St. John's Orthodox Church). This is perhaps the best wooden carving of Jesus Christ I have seen in this posture. As usual, I sat looking at the picture, but I don't know whether I was gazing or meditating...
After some time, it appeared, as if Jesus was calling me to his side. I went nearer to the door and the Lord asked me in a low voice, "Do you like this carving?"
Me : "Yes Lord, I do like it very much."
Js : "Why?"
Me : "It's very lively, realistic and communicative". $\qquad$
Js : "But the people here don't even look at me now when they enter the church... At the time of consecration, they used to stand around for a long time looking at me, praising the carving and admiring the craftsmen... I would have very much liked if they would look at me or give me a gentle touch as they pass by, as I am so near to them...."
Me : "But Lord, those who are coming from afar really care... when they are seeing it for the first time, they are filled with awe"...
Js : "You said it.... the first time, there is awe... This is true with spiritual life as well... when you are first inducted into the "spiritul" life, you are very attentive and respectful... but as it becomes a routine, the first 'spirit' or the
first three letters 'spi' lose significance, leaving it a 'ritual'...
Me : "That's true Lord... but I like it... whenever I come here I stand looking at you..."
Js: "Yes, I have seen you spending some time with me... That is why I thought of talking to you"...
Me: "The wooden rod in Thy hand attracts me..."
Js : "So you like this rod... but what is it in comparison with the stone studded golden staff in the hands of your bishops?"
Me : "Lord, I am afraid to say, it is golden in appearance... but it has no comparison with the simple wooden rod in Thy hand... The golden staff, the shining garb, the chariot-like cars, palaces... all are in Thy name... but it is all a symbol of vanity... rod and staff to instil fear in us, garbs to command respect in the streets... human voice presented as divine... whereas Thy rod though wooden, has a purpose... to tend Thy sheep..." (Ps. 23)
Jesus smiled and said, "Don't be emotional... you are living among imitations and pretentions... they are more interested in "gold, myrrh and incense" than in infant Jesus... Better keep it to yourself.... Or you will be out of the "Holy" congregation and fan groups..."
I touched the carving and silently left... with a desire to come again and listen to the Lord.
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